

Pre-visit Discussion

The first stage in a demonstration classroom project involves a pre-conference, during which participating teachers meet with the host teacher to discuss learning goals, issues around planning and assessment, anticipated student responses, and other issues of interest to the host or visiting teachers.

At this time, visitors may discuss and take on observation roles for the classroom visit, depending on the learning objectives of the lesson or of the visiting teachers. Just as teachers begin a lesson by activating the students' prior knowledge, the pre-visit discussion may be seen as the "activation" phase of the demonstration classroom learning experience. The discussion gives the visiting teacher team an opportunity to talk to the host teacher, who may "set up" the lesson for the visiting teachers and point out important aspects of the lesson, the continuum of learning leading to that lesson, particular issues with the class or the curriculum, problems that the teacher is experiencing and/or attempting to address, and so on. As a result, teachers have more information going into the demonstration class and are able to make more precise observations.

In this clip, a visiting teacher is meeting with the host teacher and other observers prior to the demonstration lesson. He discusses his own goals and challenges with respect to implementation of the three-part math lesson. He has been working on his timing of each stage to ensure that the class has sufficient time for consolidation; teachers have consistently found it a struggle to reach consolidation, often running out of time. The visiting teacher discusses the challenge of finding time to address the needs of all learners in the room.

Demonstration Classroom Visit

Following the pre-conference, teachers attend the demonstration lesson, taking careful notes on student responses and interactions, teacher decision-making, features of the classroom or of the lesson. Observation guides, tailored to the goals of the demonstration classroom, may also be used.

Of paramount importance is the fact that this learning is situated in the classroom context, where the lessons place teacher learning in the familiarity of the classroom and act as the catalyst for change. According to Lave and Wenger's (1991) seminal work, situated learning occurs within communities of practice at the site at which the learner will be performing the activity and is accordingly embedded within that context. The learning is not transmitted from one person to another, but socially co-constructed through participation as well as through mechanisms of observation and discussion.

In our study, the visit to the demonstration classroom placed the learning within the context of the classroom and made it recognizable and accessible to teachers. Even though the three-part lesson was familiar to the teachers, seeing it enacted led to new observations and understandings of how it could work, what it could look like and sound like, in their classrooms with their students. The fact that they were able to actually see the lesson in the authentic setting of the classroom allowed teachers to immediately implement some practical strategies to support the implementation of the three-part lesson format in their own classroom.

In this clip, teachers are observing in a demonstration classroom.

Debrief and Goal Setting

Visitors meet with the host teacher for a post-lesson debrief, during which observations are shared and implications discussed.

This discussion is ideally facilitated by a support person (either a math researcher or board coach or math consultant) who invites the host teacher to speak first about how the lesson went. The host teacher has an opportunity to speak to the lesson, share feelings about how it went, and note unanticipated directions and student responses. Following these initial statements, the rest of the observers can then share what they noticed, and what they recorded using their [observation guides](#). The purpose is not to evaluate the teacher

or the lesson, but to examine how the lesson functioned for students and to relate this back to the observing teachers' practices. It is important to create an atmosphere of safety and trust that will allow all teachers to share openly with colleagues without feeling judged or evaluated on performance. The discussion gives teachers the opportunity to build feelings of trust and collegiality while socially co-constructing knowledge based on their unpacking of the shared experience of the demonstration lesson.

In this clip, teachers talk about what they saw in the demonstration lesson. One teacher noticed how the host teacher had the classroom organized so that different parts of the room were used strategically for different purposes. Later, this observing teacher will adapt what she observed to her own classroom.

Enactment

Immediately following the demonstration classroom visit, the visiting teacher team may be afforded release time in which to pursue learning goals through further research, discussion, and co-planning. The fact that teachers are able to actually see the lesson in the authentic setting of the classroom can facilitate immediate implementation of some similar practices to support the enactment of their goals.

The demonstration classroom experience can end here, but the literature and this research shows how a very robust model would make these activities cyclical in nature and potentially more powerful. Ideally, goal setting and implementation would really be a launching point to a new cycle of activity. Teachers would use this opportunity to set goals for classroom implementation and for their learning in the next round of demonstration classroom activity. This iterative approach provides rich opportunities for learning, as teachers have a base of learning to drive their inquiry and implementation in the second round. This model can also be further expanded in between the activities outlined in this diagram to include support in the form of PD workshops before, during and/or after the demonstration classroom activity, visits to one another's classrooms, observations and feedback from researchers and/or PD staff, and additional release time for co-planning/co-teaching. According to Luft (1998a; 1998b; 2001; Luft & Pizzini, 1998), who has completed extensive studies on demonstration classrooms, these features of the model attend to the principles of effective professional development because they address the specific needs of adult learners, provide ample opportunities for follow up and reflection, and utilize models and methods that represent sound pedagogy as well as content.

In this clip, one teacher reflects on how she adapted the strategy of using space to mark key points in the three-part math lesson, and how valuable her observations of the demonstration classroom were to help in meeting her goal of achieving consolidation in math lessons. By connecting physical spaces to the lesson structure, this teacher was able to cue herself to maintain the structured lesson format she was learning to implement.